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Resolution For Rule Change to Northern Pike Size Limits

The Problem

In the early 1990's an over-harvest of northern pike on the Upper Winnebago Pool Lakes during the months of February and March resulted in the removal of roughly 90% of the spawning females from the population. As a result, anglers asked that the daily bag limit be reduced to two fish and the minimum size limit be set at 26".

This is the current size limit for northern pike in the Winnebago System. Later fyke netting studies by the DNR showed that the males in this population rarely grow beyond 26" in length. Therefore, almost 100% of the harvest pressure is being placed on the mature females under this rule. This also results in a waste of fish under 26" that die as a result of being caught. DNR fish managers at Oshkosh agree with anglers that this is not sound biological management of this resource.

The Lake Poygan Sportsmen's Club has repeatedly asked the DNR Fisheries Bureau to change the size limit to read, "one fish over 26." (The total bag limit would remain at two fish.) The goal is take some of the angling pressure off the mature females that keep the population stable. This will also restore the trophy northern pike fishery on the Winnebago System, and allow anglers to keep smaller fish for consumption, whether they are healthy or dead as a result of being caught. Biologically, this makes sense.

The DNR committee that deals with this rule has not met for several years, and thus far our pleas have fallen on deaf ears. As far as we know, there are no plans for them to meet in the near future.

The nature of the Winnebago System makes it unique among Wisconsin's waters and sometimes calls for unique management strategies for its resources, so it would not be unusual for rules to be different here than elsewhere.

Therefore we ask that the Conservation Congress call for this rule change in a formal resolution:

Whereas the current 26" minimum size limit for northern pike on the Winnebago System is detrimental to maintenance of a stable population and the restoration of a trophy fishery for this species, and:

Whereas past requests to the DNR Fisheries Bureau for relief from this problem have gone unheeded,

Be It Therefore Resolved, the Conservation Congress at its annual meeting held in Winnebago County on April 10, 2006 recommends that the Department of Natural Resources change the minimum size limit for Northern Pike on the Winnebago System to allow for the taking of one fish over 26" in length, while leaving the daily bag limit for the species at two.

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